



[Frederick Engels, 1820 - 1895](#)

# Philosophers

## **Johannesburg, 2004**

The Communist University started in June, 2003, more than thirteen years ago. The main text linked below was prepared for the CU when it was six months old (it has since been re-written, so that it is shorter). It is an attempt to walk through the history of philosophy using the problematic of individual-versus-society as the binding dialectical theme. As well as a chronicle of philosophical thought, it includes a diagram that traces the present-day contending schools back to a split that took place around where Marx and Engels come into the picture, in the early 1840s. That great parting of the ways was marked by a specific set of circumstances, which is worth describing and referencing.

## **Berlin, 1841**

Hegel died in November, 1831, when Karl Marx was 13 and

Frederick Engels 11. Ten years later, Marx graduated from the University of Berlin and was awarded a doctorate of philosophy by the University of Jena, shortly before his 24th birthday. Also in 1841, Engels was sent to Berlin to spend a year with the Artillery Guards. There is no record of Marx and Engels meeting in Berlin at this time. Their first recorded meeting was in Cologne, in November, 1842. Marx was by then editing a magazine called the *Rheinische Zeitung* (it was his first job) while Engels was on his way back to Manchester to recommence working in his father's company. The two teamed up permanently in Paris two years later, in 1844.

In the same year of 1841, **Ludwig Feuerbach** published his "Essence of Christianity" of which Engels later said: "*...the spell was broken; the "system" was exploded and cast aside ... one must have experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general.*" During the next part, we will look at the book [Ludwig Feuerbach and the end of German Classical Philosophy](#), which Engels wrote forty-five years later, in 1886, about the effect of Feuerbach's intervention.

Meanwhile along came **F W J Schelling**, who had been a colleague and rival of Hegel's, and had struggled in the great man's shade. In 1841, at the age of 66, Schelling was suddenly made a Prussian privy councillor and member of the Berlin Academy, with a political instruction to give lectures at the university against Hegel, so as to demolish Hegel's reputation, ten years after Hegel's death.

Hegel's philosophy had long been the pride of the Prussian establishment, but it had turned out to be potential weapon in the hands of the proletarian class then growing with the spread of capitalism in Germany. In Berlin, philosophical uproar had begun, involving the "Young Hegelians", Feuerbach, Marx, Engels and others. The revolutions of 1848 were only a few years away.

Schelling was appointed with an instruction to debunk Hegel. His lectures attracted a sensationally distinguished audience, which included Engels, who said: *"It will be our business to follow the course of his [Schelling's] thinking and to shield the great man's [Hegel's] grave from abuse. We are not afraid to fight."* Others present included the Russian anarchist **Mikhail Bakunin**, the Danish theologian **Søren Kierkegaard**, and the great Swiss humanist historian of the Renaissance, **Jacob Burkhardt**.

A good account by Andy Blunden of this "world-historic" philosophical event can be [found here on MIA](#).

In 1842, Engels published a work known as "[Anti-Schelling](#)", which includes in its Chapter 5 the following classically dialectical line: *"Only that freedom is genuine which contains necessity..."*

Engels was 21 when he started writing "Anti-Schelling". In contrast to Doctor Karl Marx, Engels was at that stage a military cadet who had never been to university (and never did go). Yet he was bold enough to challenge the official state

philosopher, in print. The image above is of Engels in 1841, in his military uniform.

In terms of my rough chronology of philosophers in today's text, this was the situation following Hume, Rousseau and Kant, and when Marx and Engels came in. Seven years prior to the revolutions of 1848, where the proletariat appears for the first time as a crucial revolutionary actor and subject of history, this was the moment when philosophy split into its subsequent fragments, of which the contending philosophical schools of today are the direct successors.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Philosophers, 2004, Tweedie.](#)
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